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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 001005

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS TU IZ

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: MFA REQUESTS USG REACTION TO
PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH PRT IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN AND
RESOLUTION OF HELO AIRCRAFT ISSUE

REF: A) ANKARA 920 B) 03 KABUL 3455

(U) Classified by Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Deutsch.
Reasons: 1.5 (B and D).

SUMMARY

1. (U) This is an action request. See para 5.

2. (C) MFA and TGS reached an agreement February 18 to establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan. MFA/TGS want to move quickly: their goal is to stand up a PRT by the time of the NATO Summit. MFA/TGS have asked for Washington's reaction to their proposal (see para 8 for details), which envisions a PRT in northern Afghanistan with a core in Faryab province and an AOR that might include two provinces currently under the UK-led PRT based in Mazar-e-Sharif and one uncovered province bordering Turkmenistan. Location is key: if the Turks are not able to establish a PRT in the north, they say they will not establish one at all. Turkish President Sezer reportedly told visiting NATO SYG February 18 that Turkey was "actively considering" establishing a PRT and that the decision was dependent on doing so in the north. They believe this proposal is consistent with NATO's initial conops for the expansion of PRTs.

3. (C) If Washington's reaction is positive, the Turks intend to immediately approach the UK to explore reducing the UK PRT's AOR. (The Turks say they already have some indications from the Brits that the current AOR is more than they can handle.) If the UK's reaction is also positive, the MFA/TGS will submit a formal proposal to Prime Minister Erdogan requesting his political and financial approval -- a step the MFA/TGS would like to take next week and one they admit (at least in the case of money) may be tough. If the PM is on board, the MFA/TGS intend to dispatch a site survey team to Afghanistan in March to examine the area under consideration and to meet with UK and US PRT personnel. The MFA does not believe the GOT requires further authorization from the Parliament before deploying civilians/military personnel to Afghanistan as part of a PRT. If Turkey is able to set up a PRT in the north, they are favorably inclined to provide police training there as well.

4. (C) On ISAF, NATO SYG reportedly discussed (in general terms) the need for Allies to increase their contributions to ISAF during his February 18 visit to Ankara, but his specific focus with Turkey was on securing a commitment on PRTs. MFA officials reiterated the GOT's desire for the US to follow through on its commitments to take care of the airlift required to transport the Turkish helicopters to Afghanistan for ISAF, and said a creative (and positive) resolution of this issue could impact favorably Turkey's deliberations on PRTs. End summary.

RECOMMENDATION/ACTION REQUEST

5. (C) The Embassy strongly endorses the MFA/TGS proposal to establish a PRT in Afghanistan and recommends that Washington respond positively to the proposal. A negative reaction from us will likely kill the PRT proposal and complicate future efforts to secure Turkish contributions to OEF or ISAF operations. The Turks requested a US response by Feb. 23. Embassy requests that Washington provide us ASAP guidance to respond to the MFA's proposal to establish a PRT in the north, as well as their interest in providing police training in Afghanistan (para 13).

16. (C) MFA DDG for South Asian Affairs Aydin Evergin and DDG for NATO Affairs Fatih Ceylan informed pol-mil and deputy-pol counselors February 20 that the MFA and TGS had reached an agreement to establish a PRT in northern Afghanistan. Evergin said that while the MFA and TGS had been considering establishing a PRT, they believed it was important to wait and see how discussions in Brussels panned out before finalizing their deliberations. The GOT was now at the "final stages" and wanted to move quickly in order to be able to stand up a PRT prior to the NATO Summit. Evergin said it was also important to move quickly in order to shore up international support for Afghanistan at this important time in the country's political development. The international community -- and NATO Allies in particular -- need to increase support for security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. He added that it would also be important for the Allies to show strong support for Afghanistan during the NATO Summit in Istanbul.

US/UK REACTIONS TO MFA/TGS PROPOSAL NEEDED

17. (C) Evergin asked that the USG provide an official reaction their proposal (see para 8) to establish a PRT in northern Afghanistan as soon as possible -- preferably by Monday, February 23. Evergin said the MFA/TGS would not submit their proposal to the PM without first knowing the US and UK positions. "If the US and the UK are not supportive, our recommendation to the PM will be negative." Evergin said the MFA/TGS proposal had not yet been discussed with either the UK or with NATO. "We want you (the US) to hear it first." Evergin added that if the US responds positively, the MFA will then raise it immediately with the UK and eventually with NATO. Ceylan said that while PM Erdogan did not know the details, he (Ceylan) had recently discussed the proposal with the PM's foreign policy advisor and told him that the PM would receive a joint MFA/TGS recommendation after getting reactions from the US and UK. FM Gul, on the other hand, was knowledgeable about the concept and was on board.

18. (C) Evergin then outlined the following MFA/TGS proposal:

--Turkey would establish a new PRT in northern Afghanistan.

--Faryab province would be the core of the PRT, with Maimana as a possible site of the PRT's HQs.

--Faryab province would be the core, but the MFA/TGS are open to considering including the Jawzjjan and Badghis provinces. (Note: at one point during the meeting, when we sought clarification on the areas under consideration, Ceylan said "Faryab is the priority, followed by Jawzjjan. We are also open to considering extending it to Badghis province." End note.) They recognized that Faryab and Jawzjjan were currently in the AOR of the UK-led PRT based in Mazar. Ceylan said that UK officials on the ground in Afghanistan had indicated that they were not able to adequately take care of the entire area currently under their PRT.

--The number of Turkish personnel would depend on the AOR. MFA/TGS were initially considering sending 50-80 people (both civilian and military), but this number could grow if the area of the PRT were to expand.

PROPOSAL CONSISTENT WITH NATO'S CONOPS

19. (C) Evergin said there were a number of reasons why the MFA and TGS believed it was paramount that any TU-led PRT be established in northern Afghanistan. He cited the following:

--long-standing and positive relations with the peoples and leaders of the region;

--common language and cultural affinity;

--relative security of the north vis-a-vis other parts of the

country;

--logistical advantages of the north that would facilitate Turkey's ability to deploy and sustain forces;

--complement plans to make significant contributions to reconstruction efforts in the north (Evergin mentioned plans to establish schools, agriculture centers in Faryab and Jawzjjan provinces); and,

--Faryab is one of the most neglected regions of the country and in need of international assistance.

¶10. (C) Evergin acknowledged that while other NATO Allies were considering establishing PRTs, they were not looking at the same area being proposed by Turkey. Ceylan added that NATO SYG confirmed during his meeting with Turkish President Sezer that Turkey's consideration of establishing a proposal in the northern was consistent with NATO's initial concept of operations, particularly the desire for the counter-clockwise expansion of PRTs.

SITE SURVEY

¶11. (C) Evergin said that once the Prime Minister approves the proposal, MFA and TGS intend to send a team to northern Afghanistan to survey the area under consideration and to meet with US and UK personnel involved with the PRTs. Evergin said that while Turks had visited the area under consideration, they had not done so with an eye toward establishing a PRT. A site survey would also give the MFA/TGS a better sense of exactly how many personnel and what supporting materials would be needed to stand up the PRT.

NO PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED

¶12. (C) Both Evergin and Ceylan said they did not believe that further Parliamentary approval would be required in order for Turkish civilians and troops to be deployed to Afghanistan as part of a PRT. Evergin said that the GOT was "covered" by Parliament's decision in September 2001 authorizing the deployment of Turkish troops abroad in support of OEF and ISAF.

PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE POLICE TRAINING

¶13. (C) Evergin said that during a recent meeting with USG officials in Afghanistan (ref b), Turkish officials were encouraged to participate in police training efforts in Afghanistan. US officials reportedly said that Turkey could help provide training at the US-established police training center in Kabul or at other centers being established elsewhere in the country. He said the Turkish police were favorably disposed to provide training in Afghanistan. If the GOT were to establish a PRT in northern Afghanistan, Turkey would be inclined to provide police training there as well if the US provided the facilities.

ISAF

¶14. (C) Deputy pol-mil counselor asked if the issue of additional Turkish contributions to ISAF was discussed during NATO SYG's visit to Ankara. Ceylan said the SYG noted in general terms the need for all Allies to increase contributions to ISAF, but said the focus of the SYG's discussions was on securing a commitment from the GOT on PRTs.

¶15. (C) Caylan raised the issue of the Turkish helicopters for ISAF (ref a), saying that during a conversation between SECDEF and MOD Gonul during the December 1, 2003 Defense Ministerial in Brussels, he heard SECDFEF tell Gonul that "if you take this decision (to offer helos for ISAF), we will help you with the transportation." SACEUR and VCJCS Pace had made similar comments to TGS. Ceylan added that the Germans had told the Turks that they would assist with

sustainment/logistics support for the helos while they are in Afghanistan. Ceylan encouraged the US to come up with a "creative" solution to address the issue of airlift in a NATO context. This could facilitate winning government approval (and funding) of the PRT, he concluded.

EDELMAN